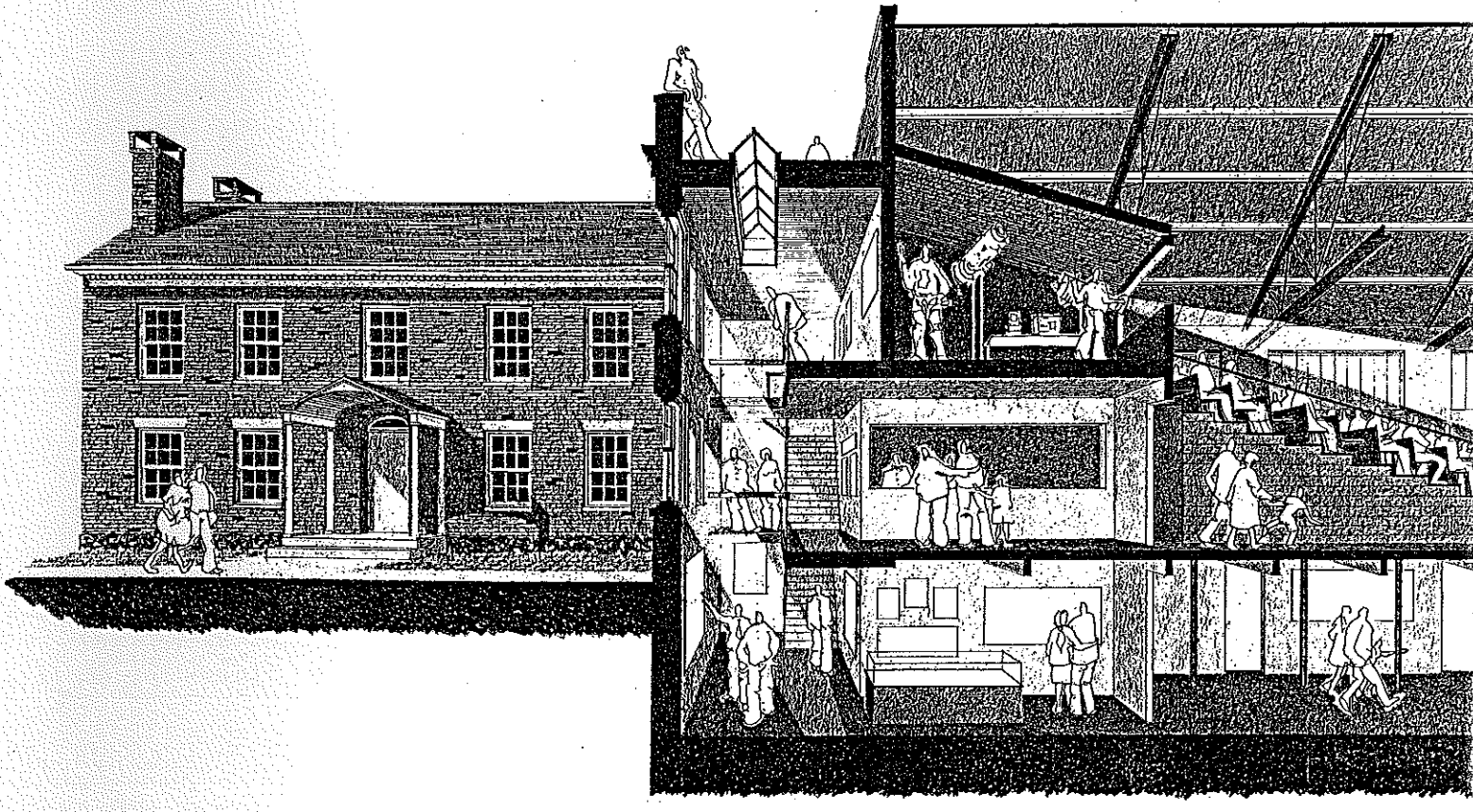


Feasibility Study  
for Re-Use of the

# MIDDLETOWN ARMORY

Middletown, Connecticut



Feasibility Study  
for Re-Use of the

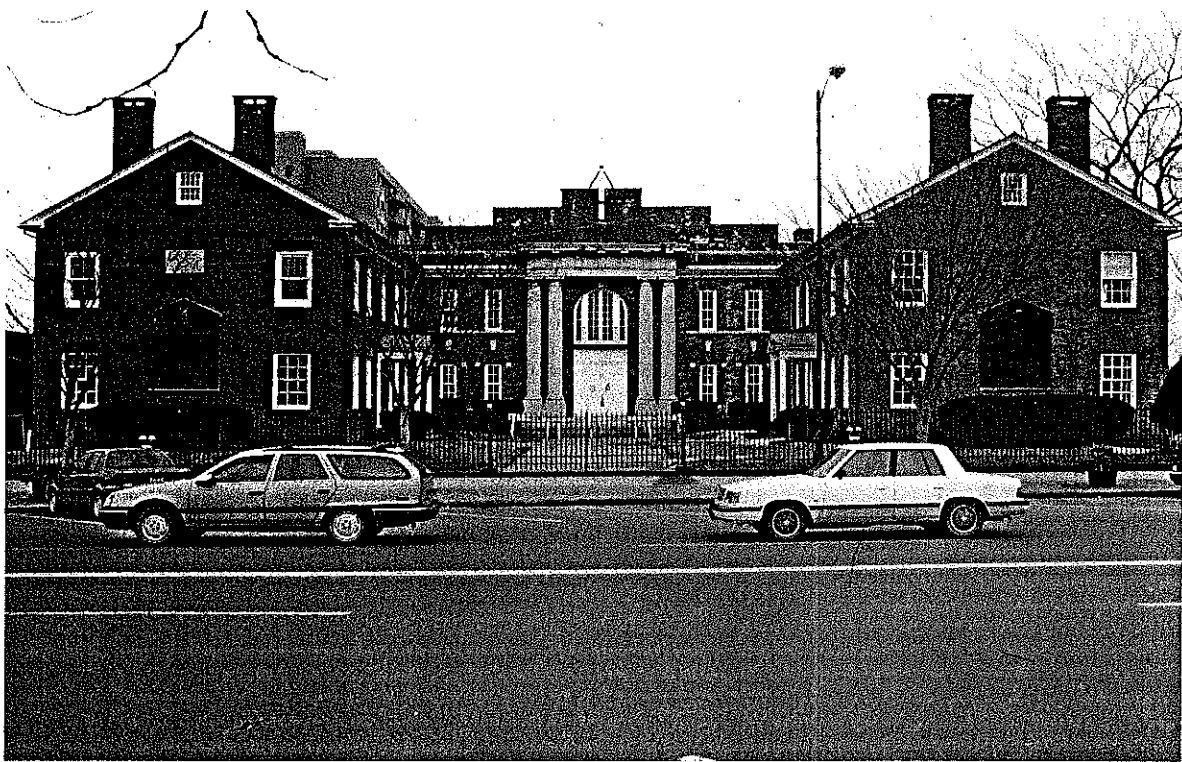
# **MIDDLETOWN ARMORY**

Middletown, Connecticut

Prepared by

LEDBETTER ARCHITECTS  
85 WILLOW STREET  
NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT 06511  
203.782.1912 / FAX 203.782.1952

October 18, 1993



## **THE ARMORY**

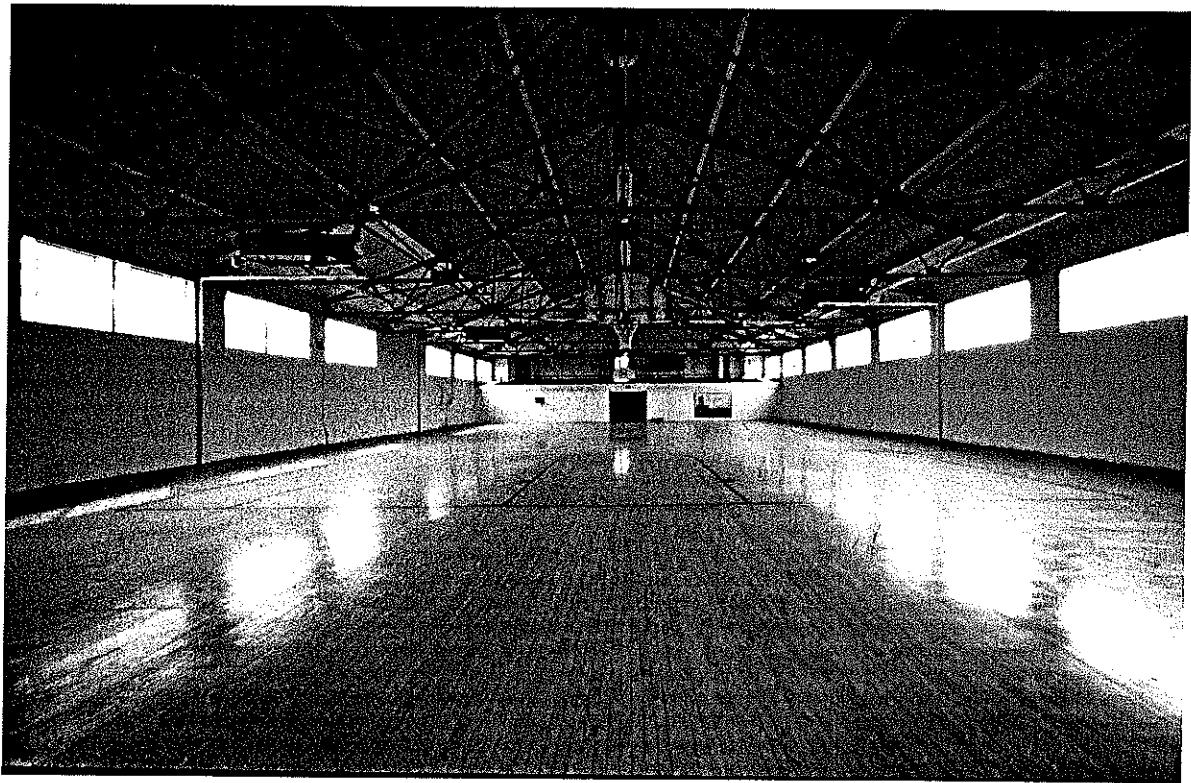
The Ben & Fay Weitzman Cultural Center

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### **PROJECT SYNOPSIS**

<b>Project</b>	Rehabilitation and Re-use of the Former State National Guard Armory 70 Main Street Middletown, Connecticut
<b>Developer</b>	Gerard H. Weitzman Pelton's Drug Stores
<b>Funding Participants</b>	Weitzman Family/Pelton's Drug Stores City of Middletown State of Connecticut Corporate Community
<b>Project Committee</b>	Gerard Weitzman, Pelton's Drug Stores Thomas Serra, Mayor, City of Middletown Mark Masselli, President, Community Health Center Bro Adams, Vice President, Wesleyan University
<b>Architectural Consultant</b>	Ledbetter Architects, New Haven, Connecticut
<b>Organizational Consultant</b>	Housing & Community Development Clinic of the Legal Services Organization at the Yale Law School, Yale University
<b>Project Scope</b>	Rehabilitation of over 32,000 square feet of existing space: 26,000 sq.ft. Public Space for Cultural, Educational, and other civic activities; 6,000 sq.ft. as Commercial space
<b>Public Use</b>	Veterans' Organizations Arts & Culture Groups Education Community Activities
<b>Organizational Concept</b>	Public/Private Partnership
<b>Organizational Structure:</b>	Nonprofit with Board of Directors

Opposite page: Existing Main Street (west) elevation.



## THE MIDDLETOWN NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY

### HISTORY AND EXISTING CONDITION

The Middletown National Guard Armory fronts the east side of Main Street in Middletown, Connecticut, and is situated within the bounds of the city's Metro South Historic district. The complex, which was vacated by the Connecticut State National Guard in 1992, is entered from the west through a courtyard formed by Main Street to the west, two wings to the north and south, and the facade of a hall and stair way that connects the two wings and acts as a formal entrance to a large, open activity space to the east. The National Guard used this large space as a drill shed, but it also has a history of being used for community functions such as basketball games and dances.

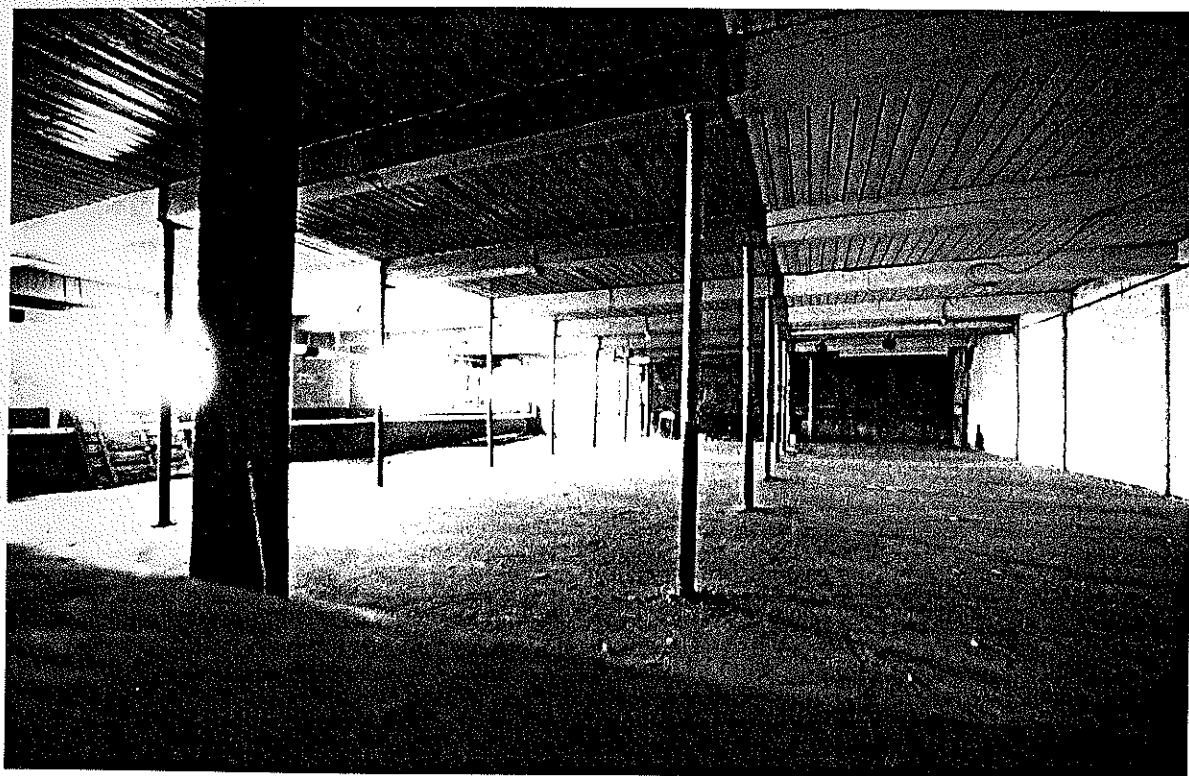
The north wing of the Armory was built by John R. Watkinson, circa 1810, as a residence facing Main Street. Watkinson was a prominent merchant and the founder of a woolen manufacturing plant on the Pameacha River in 1814. In 1836, the Federal Style house, five bays with a center hall, descended to John H. Watkinson, later President of the Middletown National Bank. The property was acquired in 1919 by the State of Connecticut for the purpose of constructing an Armory. In an interesting demonstration of adaptive reuse, the original house was turned on its foundation to face south. An exact duplicate was constructed to face the original, across the court, and the facade of the drill shed was joined to the east wall of each wing.

The wings are each two stories high with an attic. The rear building is two stories high with a full level below the large activity space / drill shed that accesses the site at grade due to the west to east slope of the site. The connector thus acts as such both horizontally and vertically, with its lowest level at the grade level space below the large activity space and its highest level at the second floor of the two wings (in other words, the connector is three stories high). The principle entrance has been at the Main Street end of the site.

The brick masonry structure is of bearing wall construction while the front wings are, in part, supported with wood bearing partitions and roof trusses and steel beam reinforcement. The drill hall is supported on a grid of beams held up by columns in the level below. The drill hall roof is supported by unprotected steel trusses. The bottom chord of the trusses is located 16 feet above the finished floor.

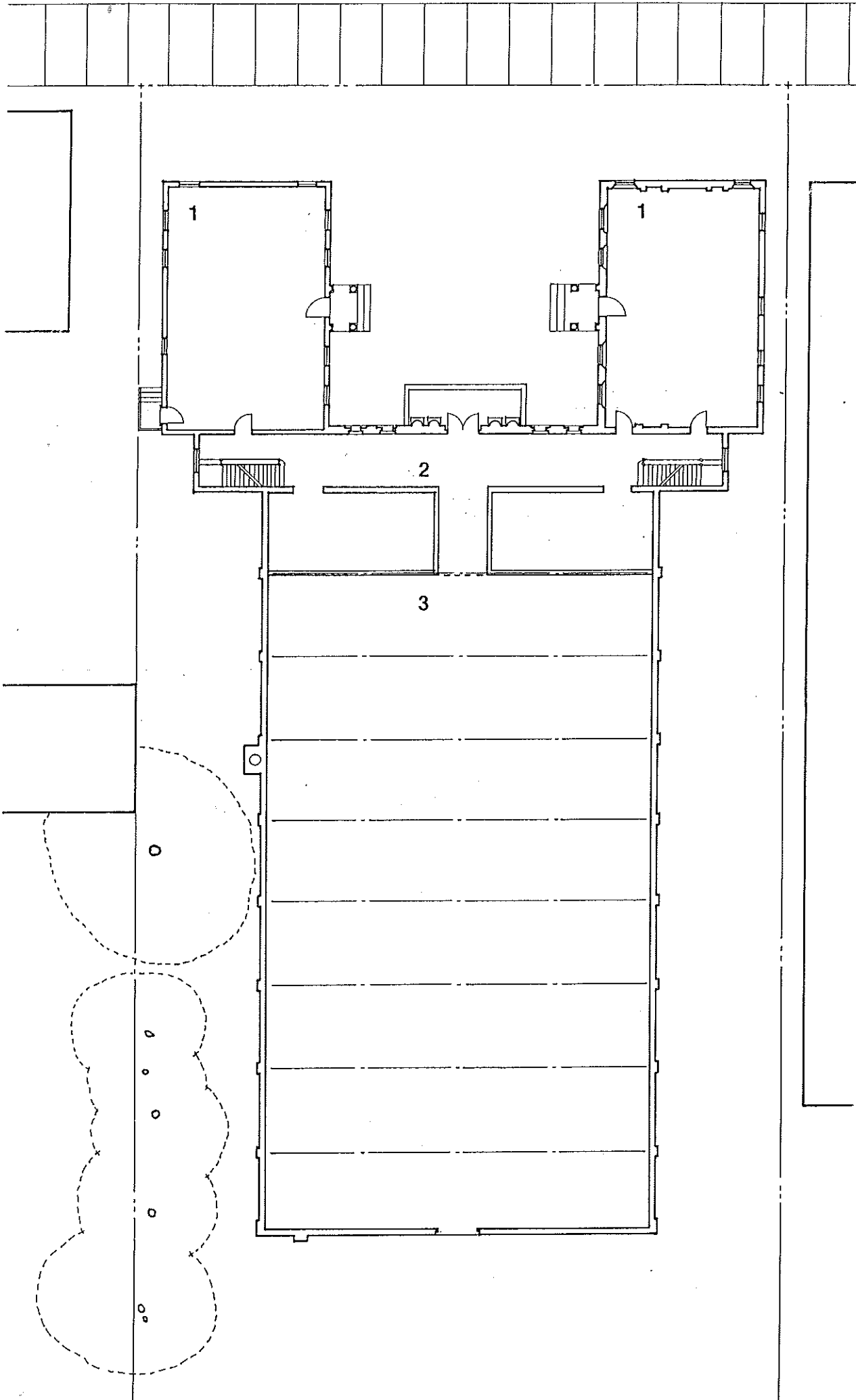


View down middle level of connector  
from south stair



Existing lower level below main activity space (drill shed)  
(Showing former firing range and motor pool)

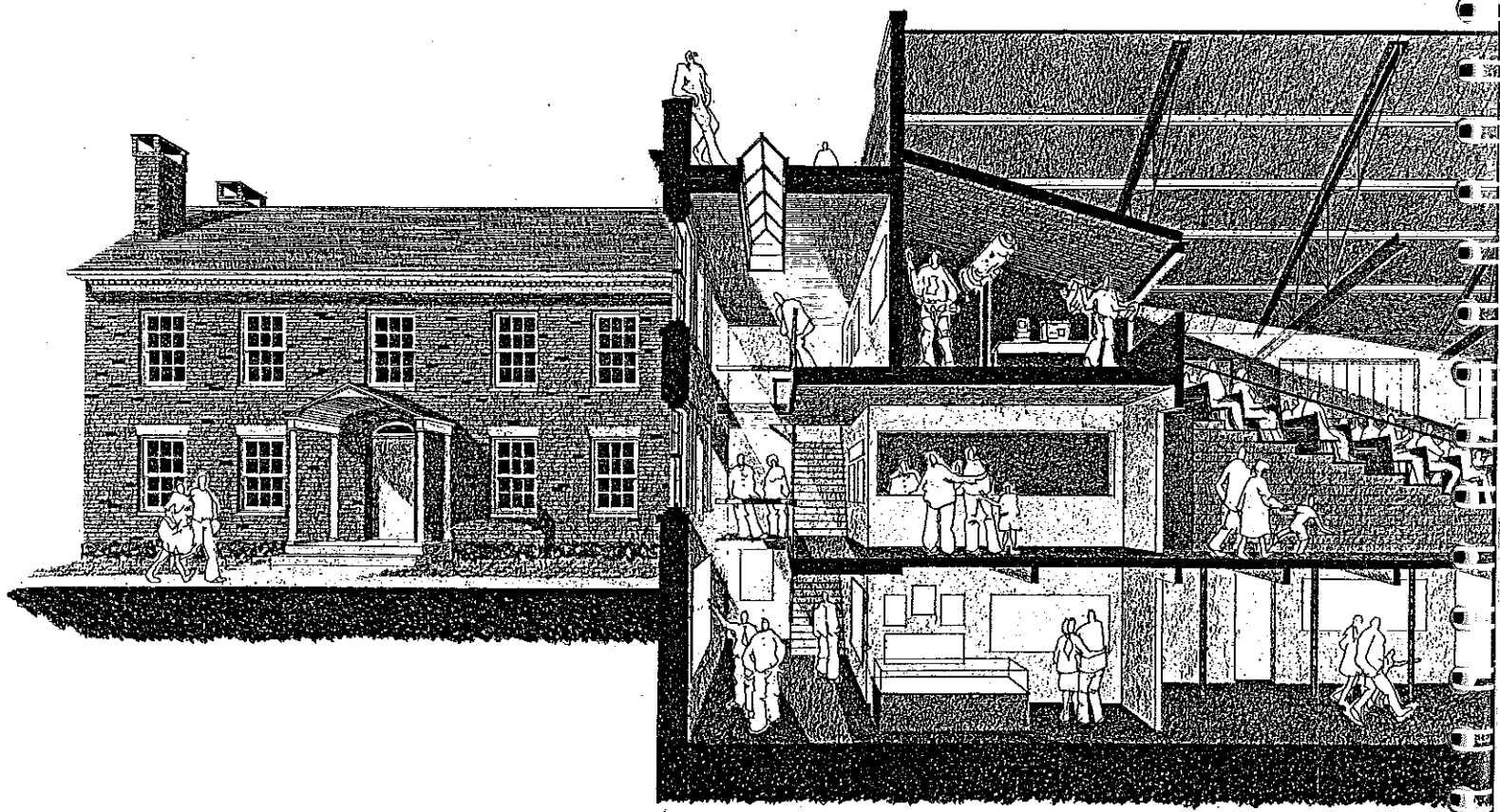


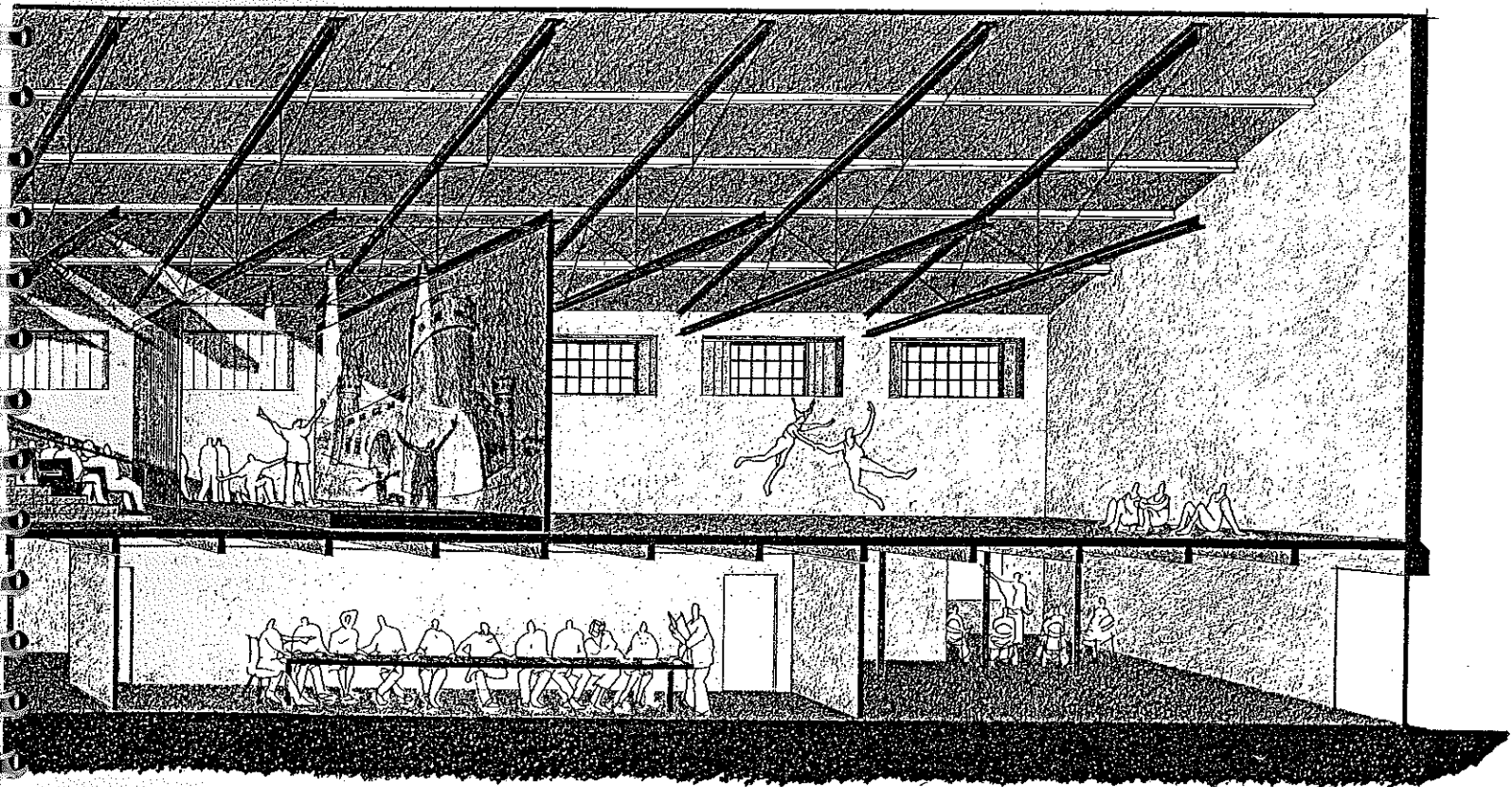


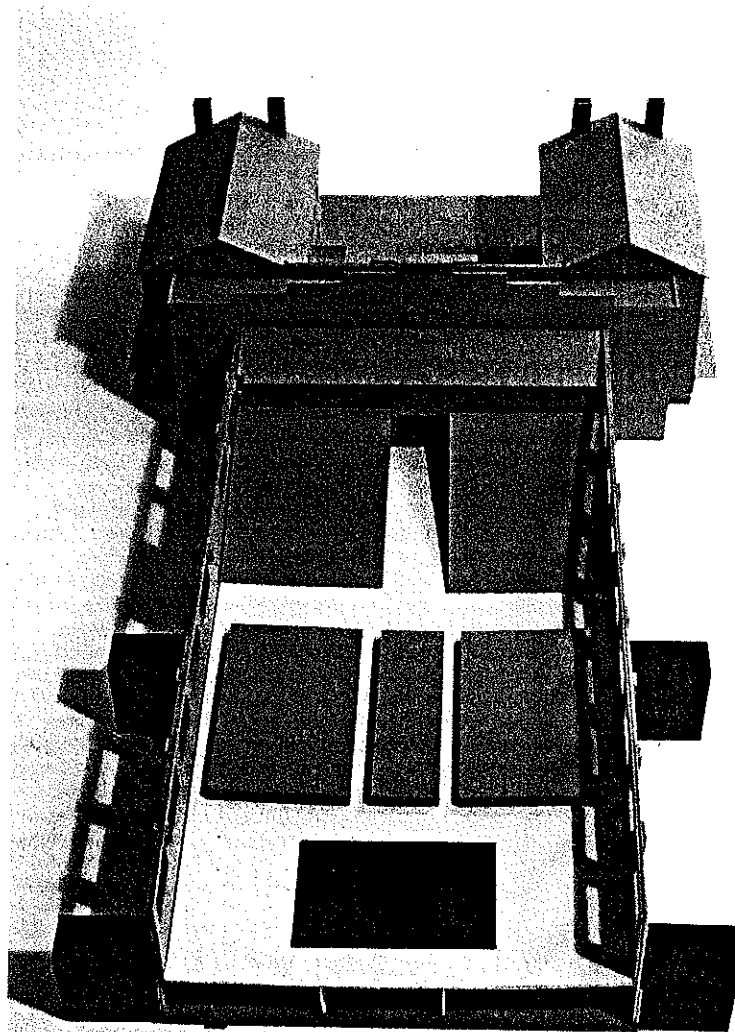
Opposite page: existing entry level plan (from Main Street, at top of page).

- 1 Wings. Wing at right is original Watkinson house of 1810.
- 2 Connector
- 3 Main activity space / drill shed

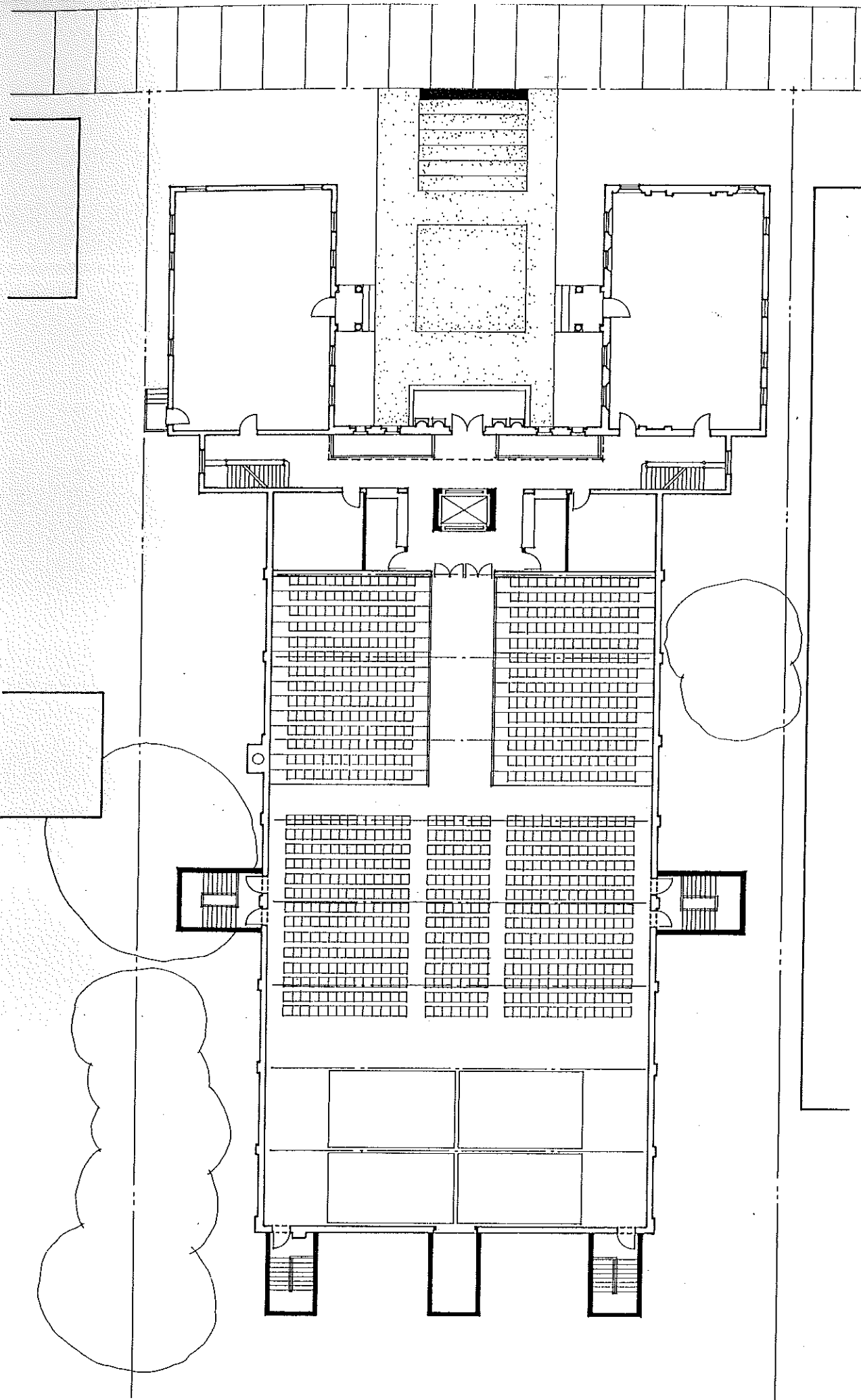
Overleaf: Longitudinal section through complex looking north, and showing proposed new uses. At left is facade of Watkinson house beyond Main Street entry court. Section then cuts through the connector, which has been opened up vertically to allow light down into the new three-level gallery space. The lowest level is shown as a veterans' and Armory history gallery, and the upper two levels as art and / or local history galleries. On the lower level of the main building various meetings and small gatherings are shown in progress. On the floor above, the main activity space, the section cuts through two events occurring simultaneously by dividing the space with movable partitions. To the left we see a play, to the right a dance rehearsal. A ticketing area is shown below the lighting / projection booths, both just to the right of the upper gallery levels.

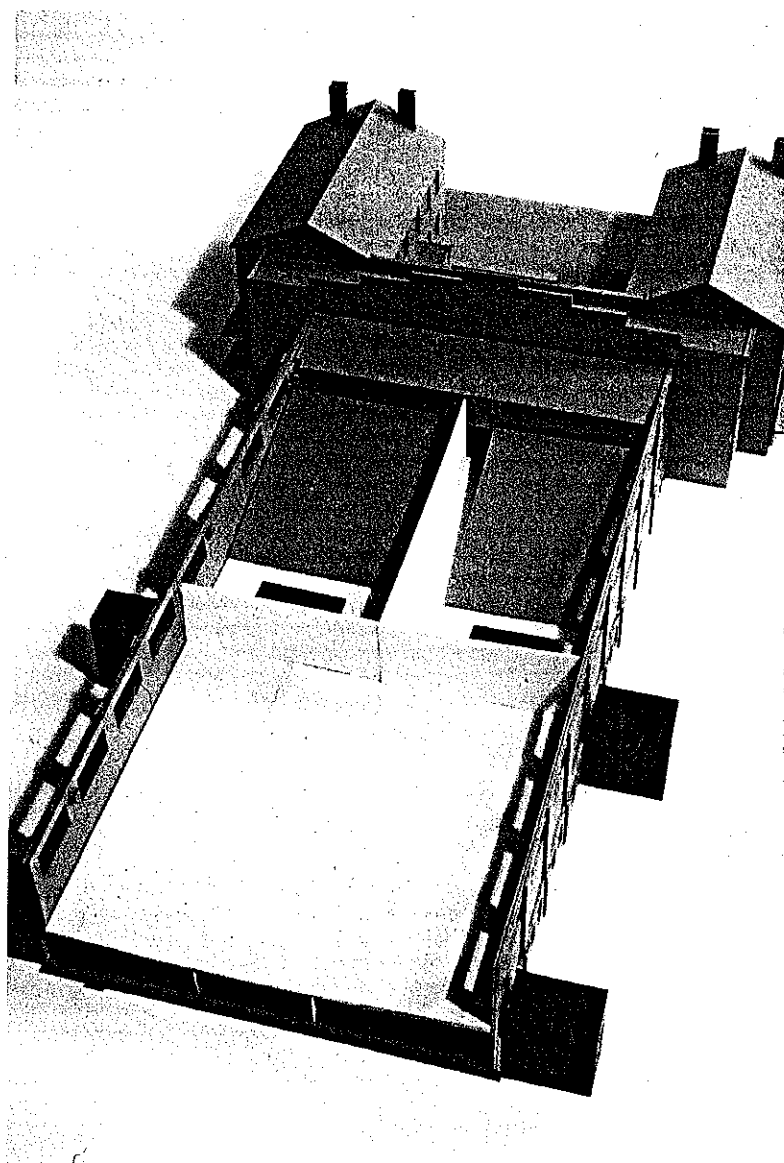




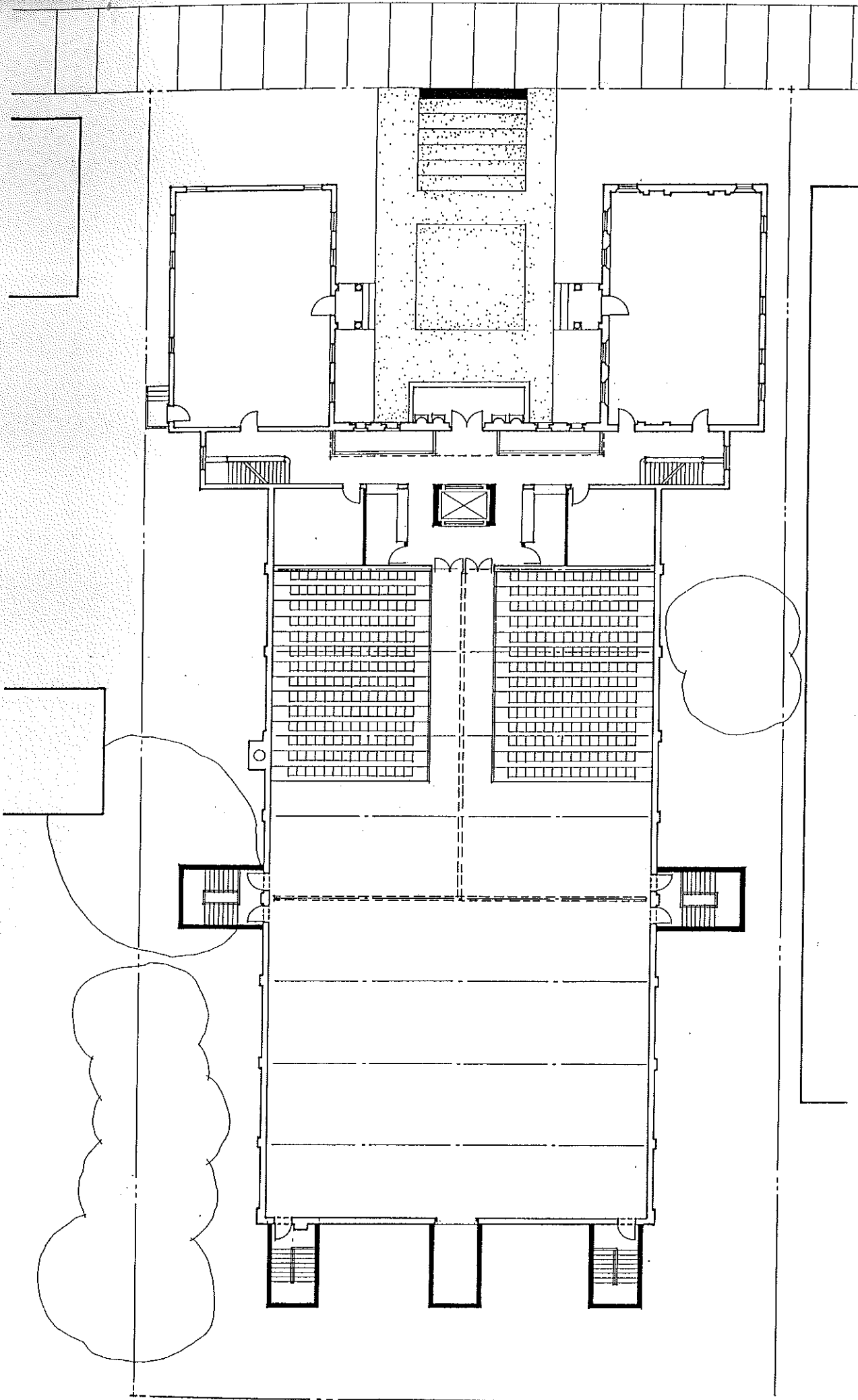


This page and opposite: Main activity space structured for a full performance with an audience of 882 people. Two slide-out seating configurations of 196 seats each are shown at rear, 490 stacking chairs are at center, and movable staging units are shown at bottom of auditorium space.

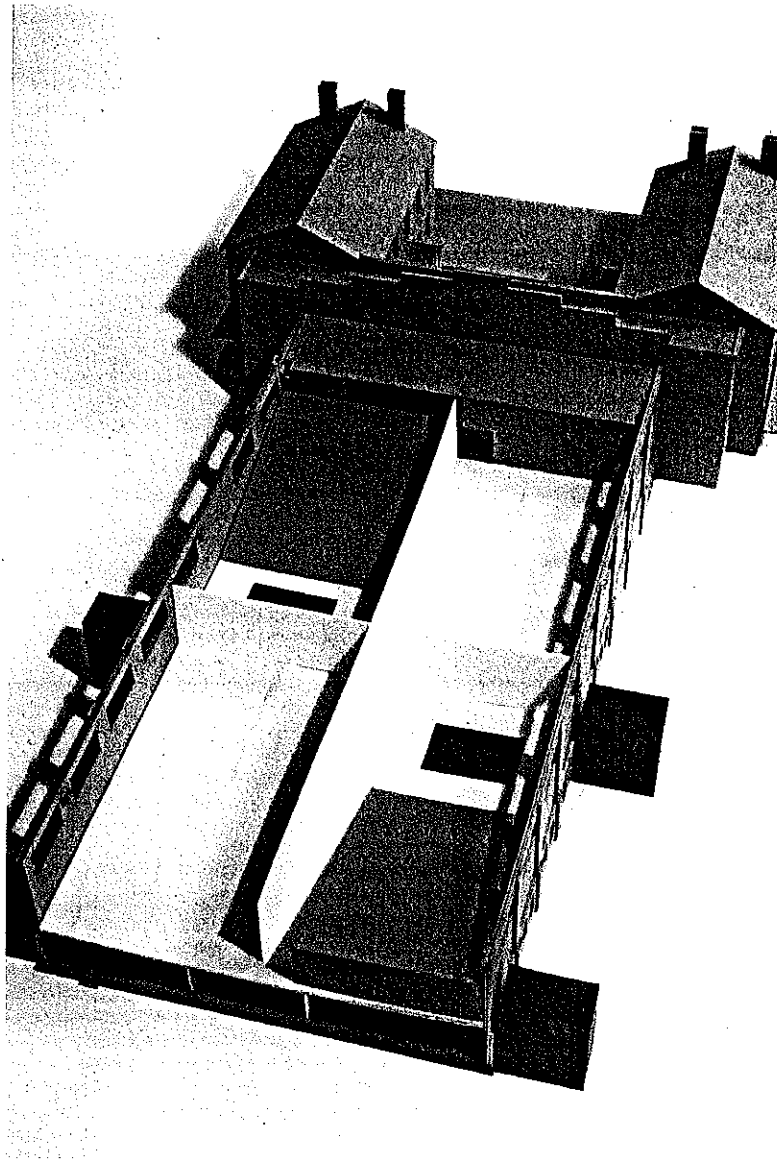




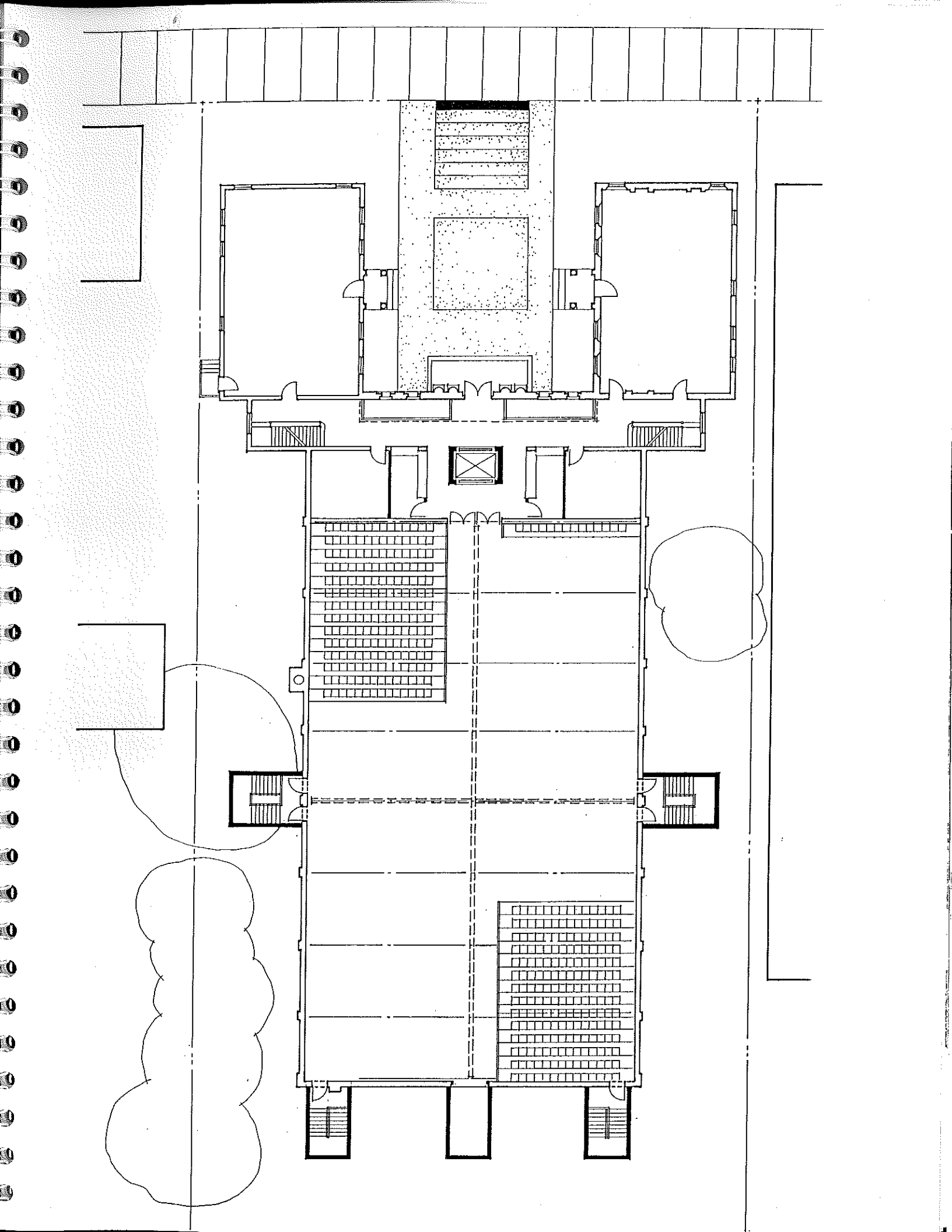
This page and opposite: The two slide-out seating configurations have been partitioned to provide separate performance areas of 196 seats each, each with its own stage or movie screen. The eastern end of the auditorium has been cleared for open use.

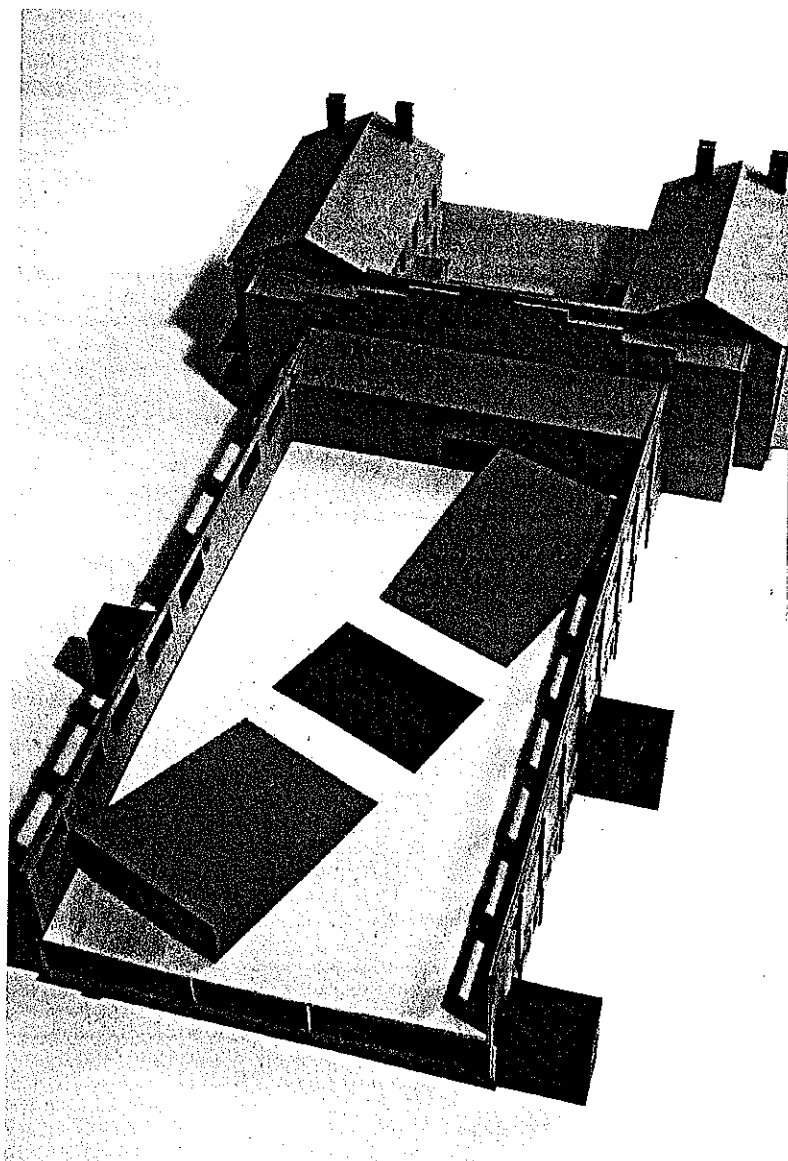


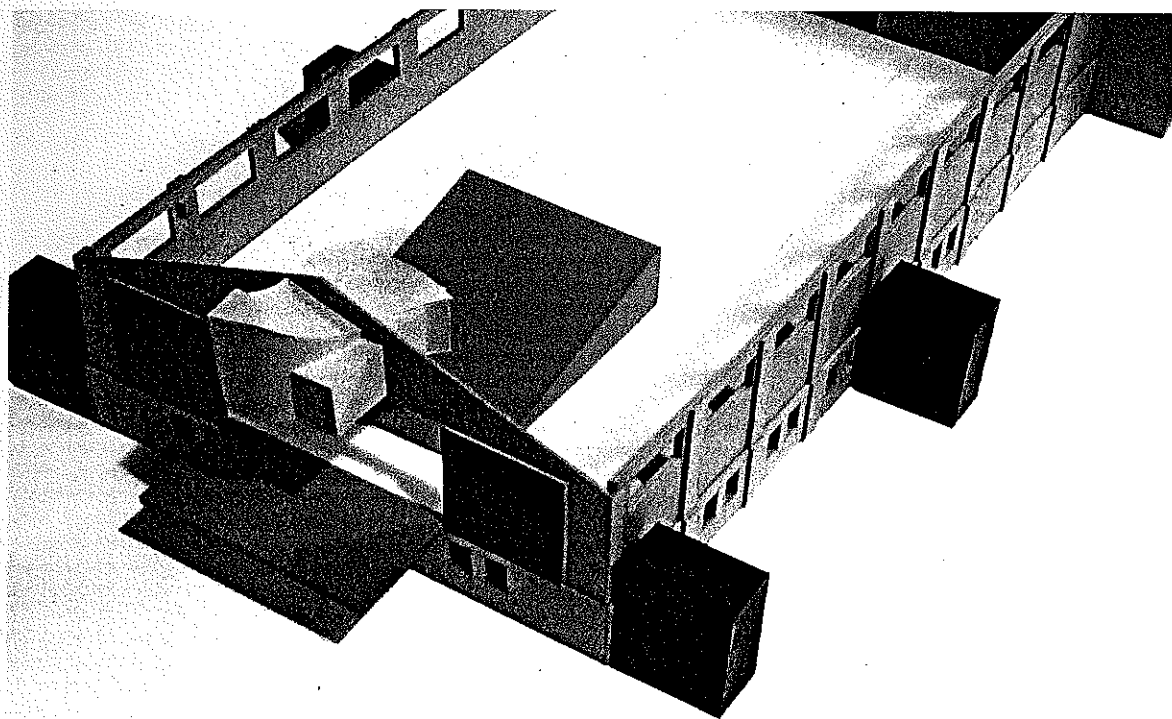




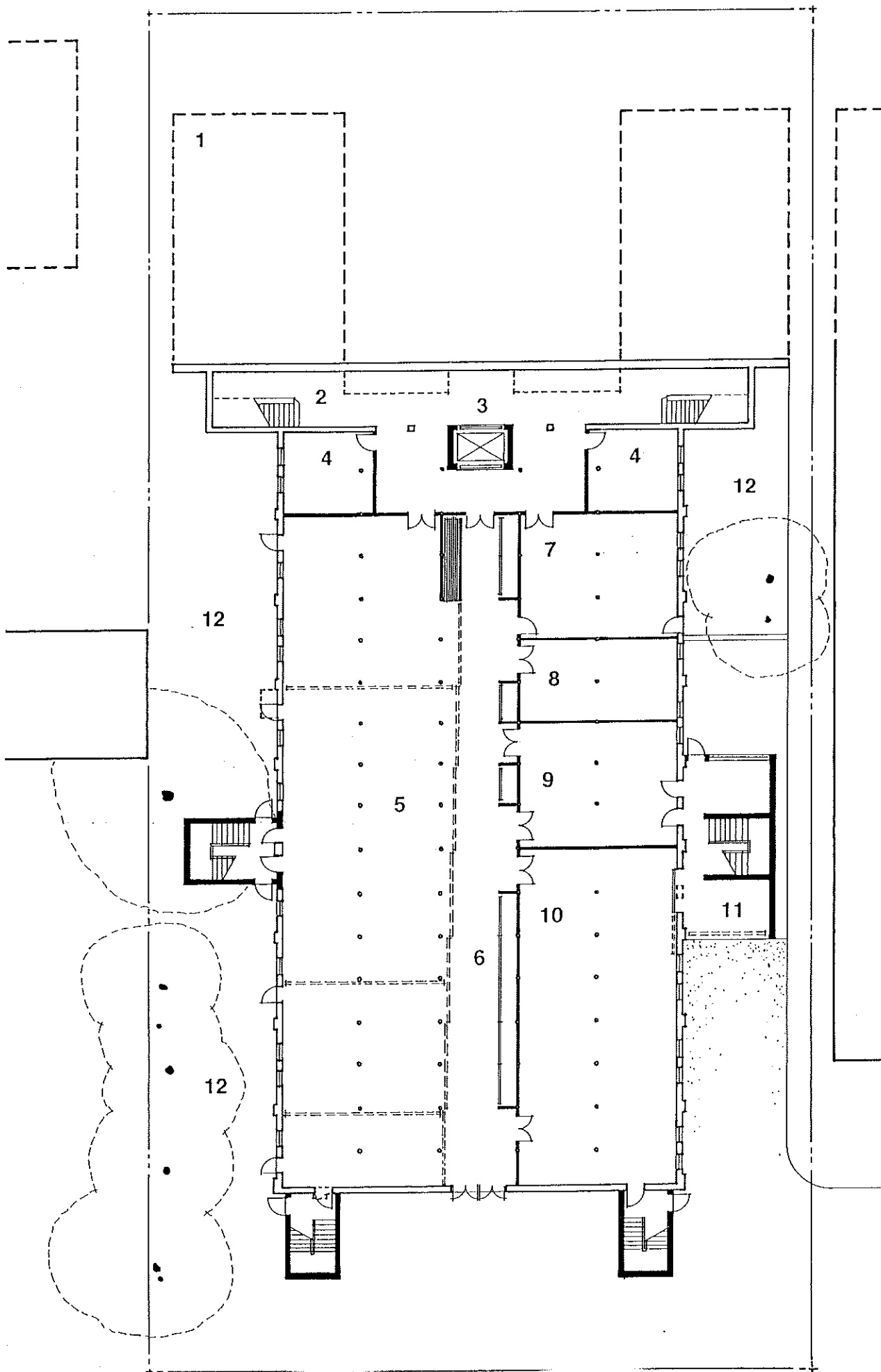
This page and opposite: Cross-cornered performance areas with cross-cornered open areas.







These two pages show two of the many configurations of staging possible with open planning. Opposite: a variation on theater-in-the-round. This page: The rear auditorium wall could be opened with sliding doors which could then serve as a proscenium for a new outdoor stage.



## PLAZA PLAN

Lower level below main activity space.

- 1 Foundations below wings
- 2 Connector. Veterans' gallery at this level.
- 3 Elevator
- 4 Toilets
- 5 Flexible meeting space with movable walls
- 6 Storage
- 7 Veterans' space
- 8 Mechanical
- 9 Kitchen
- 10 Scene shop / set construction
- 11 Loading dock
- 12 Outdoor terrace / gathering area

Overleaf: View of plaza level. Flexible meeting space is to the left.

